



## Research based teacher education



Elaine Munthe\*, Magne Rogne

University of Stavanger, Faculty of Arts and Education, 4036 Stavanger, Norway

### H I G H L I G H T S

- A research based ITE is important to foster innovative teachers.
- ITE programs vary both concerning context and content for research based ITE.
- More faculty with PhDs teach ITE for grades 5–10 than ITE for grades 1–7.
- Students report their need to read research literature more than faculty.
- Challenge: How to provide coherent programs for research and inquiry.

### A R T I C L E I N F O

#### Article history:

Received 29 December 2013

Received in revised form

5 October 2014

Accepted 13 October 2014

Available online 6 November 2014

#### Keywords:

Teacher education

Inquiry

Research based

### A B S T R A C T

Undergraduate research is one way to qualify teachers for professional learning and innovation, but there is little knowledge about how ITE programs address research for students. This study has investigated that question in one country, Norway. Data is survey data from all HEIs providing teacher education, and an interview study involving 36 teacher educators and 36 students. Results indicate that ITE programs emphasize research, but teacher-led more than student engagement. Although more teacher educators are qualified researchers, it varies greatly whether they are active researchers and what research goals the ITE leaders express. Variation is a key finding.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

An international summit on education has recently proposed that the main challenge for teacher education is to equip all teachers, and not just some, for effective learning in the 21st century (see OECD, 2011:5). On account of both demographic changes and evolving school instructional policies, many teachers today face an increasingly wide range of student learning differences be they academic, behavioral, physical, or cultural in their classrooms. This requires teacher education that helps teachers to become innovators and researchers in education, laying a foundation for continuous learning and change in the workplace (Brouwer & Korthagen, 2005; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

Undergraduate research is one means to address the challenge of developing necessary skills for a complex workplace and to advance the scholarship agenda of the teaching profession (see e.g. Healey, 2005; Hodge, Pasquesi, & Hirsh, 2007; the Council for Undergraduate Research: <http://www.cur.org/>). However, the role of research in undergraduate education is still not clear. The methods

for involving students in undergraduate research, topics covered, and even the concept of what undergraduate research is, vary between disciplines, colleges, and universities (Gomez, 2013).

The study conducted for this article is a case study of initial teacher education where the overarching research question is: What characterizes research based teacher education? The case is one country, Norway, where a national teacher education reform emphasizing research was introduced in 2010 (Munthe, Malmo, & Rogne, 2011). 19 higher education institutions (HEIs) provided 4-year initial teacher education programs for grades one through ten (teaching in the compulsory school years), and all 19 HEIs have taken part in the quantitative survey whereas faculty and students from six HEIs have taken part in an interview study. The results are discussed in light of challenges for research based teacher education.

### 1.1. Examples of how research is addressed in teacher education programs

Gomez (2013) has pointed out that what undergraduate research is varies from program to program. A brief review of how research is addressed in Finland, the USA, Scotland and Norway reveals that there are some obvious differences.

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [Elaine.munthe@uis.no](mailto:Elaine.munthe@uis.no) (E. Munthe).

Research based teacher education in Finland is described as a program where there is a major subject, methodological studies, and a relationship with the reality of the school (Jyrhämä, Kynäslähti, Krokfors, 2008:5). Inquiry into school practices, and teaching and learning is emphasized as the most important aspect of research in teacher education. Toom et al. (2010) explain that the objective of teacher education is not to educate researchers or even teacher-researchers, but to acquire an inquiring attitude to teaching.

Thus, teachers are able to observe, analyze and develop their work. Teachers' pedagogical thinking means the ability to conceptualize everyday phenomena, to look at them as part of a larger instructional process and to justify decisions and actions made during this process (Toom et al., 2010:339).

Another important goal for research based teacher education in Finland is that it develops autonomous teachers with the ability to make rational, theory-based decisions and to consume as well as produce research. The production of research occurs during the students work with their BA and MA theses (Toom et al., 2010). The researchers stress the point that the main priority of the BA and MA theses is not to produce "new knowledge or novel results, but rather to produce a research report and discover something either practical or theoretical based on the research" (see p. 333).

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), in the USA, requires programs (in this case for early education teachers) to develop teachers who are "engaging in continuous, collaborative learning to inform practice; using technology effectively with young children, with peers, and as a professional resource," and also who are "integrating knowledgeable, reflective, and critical perspectives on early education" (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2012: 39). The emphasis here is on the teachers' own continuous learning. Although the word "inquiry" is not used, it is probable that this would be one aspect of collaborative learning. The Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) in the USA has defined four knowledge areas for students of teaching that represent standards for all accredited programs: subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, caring and effective teaching skill, and cross-cutting themes (learning how to learn, multicultural perspectives and accuracy, and technology). There is no mention of the term "research based program." The Stanford University STEP program intends to develop among graduates "an understanding of and commitment to research, reflection and inquiry in the classroom" (see web page: <https://gse-step.stanford.edu/about>). None of the courses described online, nor the handbook, available online, provide any more information about how students learn to understand and commit to research, but there are several examples of inquiry and reflection (e.g. tasks during field placement).

The overall aim for Scottish teacher education programs is to prepare student teachers to become competent, thoughtful, reflective and innovative practitioners, who are committed to providing high quality teaching and learning for all pupils (General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) (2006). Furthermore, programs are expected to prepare students who "should engage with research and scholarship and, where appropriate in the future, be actively able to practice research through, for example, professional enquiry" (GTCS, 2006:3). This goal does not appear to emphasize undergraduate research, and we might even question whether it is a goal for Initial Teacher Education (ITE) to qualify all teachers for professional inquiry.

In the case of Norway, Initial Teacher Education (ITE) for the compulsory school years (grades one through ten) should prepare students to work in research based ways (Norwegian Department

of Education & Research, 2010). This is also a major reason for introducing a compulsory BA thesis for the third year (out of a total of four years). This provides students with the opportunity to gain insight into scientific methods and philosophy of science as well as first-hand experience with a small-scale research project. However, learning to work in research based ways, if we understand this as evidence informed practice or an inquiry approach to practice, also places demands on mentor teachers at field placement schools. Research conducted in Norway indicates that although mentor teachers at collaborating schools appear to be among the better qualified teachers in schools, and they perceive their own work as being of good quality (Munthe, & Ohnstad, 2008), this does not necessarily mean that they perceive themselves as teacher educators (Ohnstad & Munthe, 2010; Nilssen, 2009).

Therefore, it could well be that Norwegian students also experience what Irish students in the Learning to Teach Study reported (Conway et al., 2010; Long, McKenzie-Robblee, Schaefer, et al., 2012). A key finding here, was ways in which student teachers felt they had to hide their identities as learners in their field placement sites. Contrary to their 'official' identities as students of teaching, they typically felt compelled to present themselves as fully qualified teachers which foreclosed opportunities for observation, co-teaching and a more gradual exploratory enculturation into practice.

### 1.2. Research or inquiry?

The terms "research" and "inquiry" are either not used when describing teacher education programs or appear to be used interchangeably in the brief presentation of program goals above. Reid (2004) proposes, however, that there are a number of characteristics of research that are not necessarily evident in inquiry, including that research uses appropriate research methods and methodologies, it builds upon the literature in the area being researched, it is an accessible activity open to peer review, and that the knowledge that is produced is applicable to other researchers and research contexts. Sometimes inquiry may meet these requirements, often it will not. Inquiry can be systematic, it can involve investigating literature on the topic being studied, but it needn't be intended to produce results for a wider public that can be tested and reviewed for others. In this sense, inquiry can be described as evidence based or evidence informed practice (Cordingley, 2003).

Does it matter whether we distinguish between the two concepts or not? We propose that it can matter because it can help both providers of teacher education and employers of teachers to understand the kind of qualification that takes place in teacher education. If we follow Reid's rationale (above), then we might expect that undergraduate teacher education emphasizes inquiry to qualify students to question practices, to seek knowledge, and to work in evidence informed ways, but not necessarily to conduct research themselves when research is understood in more rigorous terms, involving scientific and systematic methods and peer review. Qualifying for research could be expected at the Master's degree and certainly at the PhD level. An inquiring attitude is necessary both when conducting inquiry and when conducting research. We see above, that Finnish teacher education appears to emphasize inquiry (evidence based or evidence informed practice) also at the MA level. Other programs emphasize careful reflection, and at least one (our case study) emphasizes research.

### 1.3. Context and content for research based teacher education

Whether or not a teacher education program is able to provide a research based program can depend on contextual factors. A main

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/373998>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/373998>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)